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UNCLAS GEORGETOWN 000040

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SUBJECT: CARICOM UPDATE--DRUGS, DISASTERS, ECONOMIC
INTEGRATION TOP AGENDA

REF. A. PORT OF SPAIN 000039

[B](#). 05 GEORGETOWN 001317

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Patrick Manning, speaking as chairman of CARICOM, identified drug control, disaster preparedness, and deeper regional integration as key issues facing the organization. He also announced January 30 date for the signing ceremony for the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. In a January 10 press conference held at CARICOM Secretariat with President Jagdeo and CARICOM Secretary

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General Edwin Carrington, Manning identified the regional drug trade, and the corresponding influx of arms, as a security issue that will command CARICOM's agenda in the coming year. Manning also identified a need for greater cooperation among regional law enforcement officials.

[1](#)3. On the subject of natural disasters, Manning stated that disasters elsewhere in the world draw attention away from what some view as the "insignificant Caribbean". He urged the region to examine ways to protect itself against hurricanes such as those that have impacted Grenada, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Belize and Haiti in recent years.

[1](#)4. Issues of economic integration will also be front and center during Manning's tenure as chairman. Ref A reported Manning's condemnation of PetroCaribe and his warning that Trinidad may cease to export oil to PetroCaribe participants. Locally, at the opening of the 20th meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on January 12, Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Clement Rohee formally recommended that the CARICOM Secretariat make a proposal to COTED for member states to be compensated as a result of breaches in the rules governing the suspension of the Common External Tariff (CET). A GOG press release reported that Guyana may take alleged breaches of the CARICOM's Common External Tariff on rice to the Caribbean Court of Justice. A COTED working document reportedly cites Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica and Grenada for failing to provide import data on rice for January to June 2005 and includes numerous instances of failure to apply the CET to rice imports from the U.S. As the region's largest rice producer, Guyana has long advocated greater enforcement of the CET.

[1](#)5. Manning also announced a June 30 signing ceremony in Jamaica for the Caribbean Single Market Economy. This appears to be a slippage from the January 23 date given by Secretary General Edwin Carrington at a press conference in

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December (reftel B). This may be due to the failure of members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), to join by December 31, 2005 as anticipated. The OECS members--Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia--are reportedly concerned about trade concessions on commodities such as wheat flour and beer under Article 56 of the revised CARICOM treaty and the establishment of a regional development fund. President Jagdeo also urged OECS states to sign on to the treaty.

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